



The “Escola Guatemala” and the memories of an avant-garde educational experience

A Escola Guatemala e as memórias de uma experiência educacional de vanguarda

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Abstract

The present work aims to understand the educational experience held in the School Guatemala in the 1950s and 1960s, supported by the triad of concepts: memory (LE GOFF, 1990; ROSSI, 2010), project (VELHO, 1999) and identity (POLLAK, 1992). The year in which the world fought each other in the Great War brought disastrous results to the economy of many countries, especially developing ones. This determined a global rearrangement, each country adopting strategies and measures to meet their deficits. In education, the time also called for a restructuring.

It was necessary to find mechanisms that meet the huge demand generated by the social crisis of post-war. In this context, it was born the Escola Guatemala, inaugurated in April 1954 by the Federal District government, which became in the following year, the first Experimental Center of Primary Education-INEP CBPE. With the disfigurement characterization of the INEP after the coup of 1964, the school was losing its status as a "hub" for experimenting. Officially, however, ceased to be experimental in the 1970s, when the INEP was transferred to Brasília.

Keywords: History. Memory. Experimental schools.

Resumo

O presente trabalho tem como objetivo compreender a experiência educacional realizada na Escola Guatemala nas décadas de 1950 e 1960, sustentado pela tríade de conceitos: memória (LE GOFF, 1990; ROSSI, 2010), projeto (VELHO, 1999) e identidade (POLLAK, 1992). Os anos em que o mundo digladiava-se na Grande Guerra trouxeram resultados funestos para a economia de muitos países, especialmente aqueles em desenvolvimento. Isso determinou um reordenamento mundial, cada país adotando estratégias e medidas para suprir seus déficits. No campo da educação, o momento também reclamava uma reestruturação; era preciso encontrar mecanismos que atendessem à enorme demanda social gerada pela crise pós-guerra. Nesse contexto, nasceu a Escola Guatemala, inaugurada em abril de 1954 pelo governo do Distrito Federal, que se tornou no ano seguinte o primeiro Centro Experimental de Educação Primária do Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira (Inep). Com a descaracterização do órgão após o golpe de 1964, a escola foi perdendo o status de "centro de experimentação". Oficialmente, no entanto, deixou de ser experimental na década de 1970, quando o Inep foi transferido para Brasília.

Palavras-chave: História. Memória. Escolas experimentais.

Introduction

The memory (as David Hume knew well) with no doubt has something to do not only with the past, but also with the identity and,

thus (indirectly), with the own persistence in the future (ROSSI, 2010, p. 24).

The discourse on memory comes from antiquity. The “Art of Memory” (BOLZONI, 1989; ROSSI, 2010; YATES, 2007) to “Neuroscience” (BOLZONI, 1989), resulting at what today is commonly called culture of memory, there is a growing concern among researchers to understand which is the place of memory in contemporary society. According to the philosophical tradition (and common sense), the memory “seems to refer to a persistence, a reality somehow intact and continuous; reminiscence by contrast, refers to the ability to retrieve something that had before and it was forgotten” (ROSSI, 2010, p. 15). In a way, its roots are firmly seated in the primordial fear of humans losing the link with its history, with its past. This article is a fragment of a larger study conducted under the Project “Inep within the policies of the MEC in the years 1950/1960”¹, drawn from the analysis of some achievements of this body, more specifically the experiences developed in “laboratory schools”. Here we sought to understand the place of memory in contemporary society and the relationship between memory-project identities, embodied in the Experimental School of Rio de Janeiro - Guatemala School - work of Anísio Teixeira.

Thus, what is called Memories of an Educational Experience Vanguard was found in the present fragments of a project that began to be drawn at least thirty years prior to his application - in the past - and that under the circumstances could not be realized at the time, maturing on hold until new times and other opportunities could make it a reality.

The new times have come and long gone. The project, understood here as “an instrument of negotiating reality with individual or collective actors, consolidating its existence as a way of expression, articulation of interests and goals” (VELHO, 1999, p. 103), was so carefully cherished,

¹ Research group under the supervision of Ana Waleska Pollo de Mendonça (PUC-Rio) and Libânia Nacif Xavier (UFRJ), involving undergraduates, masters and doctorate, funded by CNPq and completed in 2006.

elaborated and re-meaning that finally took place, fulfill its function until finally moving towards its setting and provide a place of memory. The notion of memory places which we use proposed by Nora (1993, p. 15) concerns places physical, tangible, such as “places topographic, as archives, libraries and museums; symbolic places such as celebrations, pilgrimages, the birthdays or emblems; functional places like manuals, autobiographies or associations [...]”. This notion is conditional upon the functional sense, therefore is neither operational nor universal, but approximate.

Coined in the late 1970s to address issues surrounding the identity of France, was the basis for a great seminar that brought together historians and social scientists French. What Nora called places of memory for it was considered a concept that can work specifically for the case of French history and memory, but has subsequently been assimilated by scholars from different areas and parts of the globe. The author denies the existence of a true memory in modern societies. For him, this is a

hallmark of primitive societies, have been replaced by the *places of memory*, physical and symbolic spaces informed by the *desire of memory*, but the memory which would have been achieved by the story, leaving take root in the territory of the holy secularize their operations (NEVES, 2000, p. 12).

Memories of school

If you need to think about the institutionalization of *places of memory* as an interlacing of two movements - a transformation in terms of reflection on the part of the story and the end of a tradition of memory, *place memory* is therefore a transition point between two axes. In their concrete dimensions, the achievement of this particular project - the creation of the School Experimental Guatemala - is a process experienced and experienced, which has a symbolic character because it refers to old dreams, ideologies, ideals and beliefs, on the one hand have changed with

the defeats experienced and the relentless action of time on individuals, on the other not faded sufficiently to change it completely.

Teixeira and members of the Movement for the New School Educational dispersed with the rise of the New State. Some co-opted, others and others still disenchanted, marginalized - as himself. Despite all efforts, in the thirties of the innovators strength was not enough to deploy the educational project for a long period mobilized their lives. Years later, the opportunities allowed Anísio to resume some of its fundamental principles. It is not known if this return can be explained by quasi-religious faith in its potential, or if it can be interpreted as a new commitment to updating or, if represented an attempt to reconstruct his memory. After all, as we are reminded by Margarida Neves (2000, p. 12) on the complex interweaving of coordinates that is, memory “is work and requires action, active construction and reconstruction”.

It is important to emphasize that the memory is an essential from what is usually appoint as identity both of individuals and constituent groups. Michael Pollack (2002) as makes a connection between memory and identity, says that the memory is a built phenomenon resulting from the work of individual or social organization in a process that may be both conscious and unconscious. Thus, memory is an element that is part of the sense of identity, a factor of paramount importance for the sense of continuity and consistency of a group or an individual's perceptions of them. For the author (POLLAK, 1992), the identity can also be thought of as an image that the individual or group to build and for itself over the life, this image that is presented to others and themselves that, after all, can believe in their own representation. In this sense, the construction of identity is a phenomenon that occurs in accordance with the standards of acceptability and credibility and makes it through negotiations. Memory and identity are therefore values almost always forged and played in social conflicts and conflicts that oppose various political groups (POLLAK, 1992).

This was undoubtedly the case of Project Pioneer Teixeira. However, it is not possible to think on the materialization *stricto sensu* of this project. Although evidence pointing to commonalities among some

key assumptions of ideology and doctrine renewing contended that the experience at the School Guatemala, one must consider that nearly twenty and five years had passed and neither the circumstances nor the people nor same integrity that project remained the same. It is, however, possible to state that “The awareness of the *project* depends crucially on the memory that provides the basic indicators of a past that produced the circumstances of the present without awareness of which would be impossible to have or develop projects” (VELHO, 1999, p. 101).

As Paul Veyne (1972) tells us, *history does not repeat itself*. Nor is it reasonable to assume that one can “resurrect the past” like the mythological phoenix that rises from its own ashes, but to consult the archives, weave the contents of documents, searching the literature, and ownership of data, take our own historicity is tempting to borrow the meaning of the last lines of the book fascinating Duby (1993) and also served him the title: *The story continues...*

This other story (continuing?) begins in the 50s, when the Brazilian society was seen again mobilized challenged to find solutions for effective national development. The difficult years in which the world was involved in the Great War brought disastrous results for the economy of many countries, especially those in early stages of development. This determined a reordering world in which each country has adopted strategies and measures to address their deficits. In Brazil, the development ideology marked the debates on restructuring and socio-economic policy of the country.

In education, the time also claimed a new structure. It was necessary to find mechanisms that meet the huge demand generated by the social crisis of the postwar period. Education was once again the subject of heated discussions and passport to development intended. In this scenario what timely Teixeira returns to public boards and issues relating to the educational policy of the country. The events that have accelerated this new ascension were, first, the indication for the CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education), and second, ownership INEP in the following year. After more than a decade, these may have been the best opportunity to Anísio once since leaving the

direction of the Department of Public Instruction of the Federal District, his chances of putting in place large-scale projects, such as the to create a web of knowledge to better understand the problems and shortcomings of the educational system of the country, were virtually nil.

The context of Brazil and the very dynamic world of the '50s and '60s, somehow favored a return of educational development on a scientific basis, inherited from the 30s. It was necessary to promote intellectual debates to formulate projects that reorient the State policies anchored on the relationship between industrialization, scientific and educational renewal. The sum of these factors constituted fertile ground for the return of Deweyan pragmatism among our educators, which meant resorting to its large Brazilian exponent: Teixeira. It could not have been more providential. Back to public life and mobility policy that represented Anísio could finally put into practice his educational project for so many years was forced to shelve².

In late 1953, Teixeira created the Center for Educational Documentation and by that time begins to be gestated the Center for Advanced Studies, Educational Center that this will actually be the foundation that will give rise to the Brazilian Center for Educational Research (CBPE) effectively created in 1955, an initiative that is finally possible with the support of UNESCO. The CBPE was linked to INEP and concomitant to its creation, there is also a network he articulated: Regional Centres of Educational Research, located at important points in the country, as Porto Alegre, Salvador, Recife, Sao Paulo, Belo Horizonte and of course in Rio de Janeiro, then the Federal District (TEIXEIRA, 1999).

² Not only Anísio, but Fernando de Azevedo, Cecilia Meireles and other signatories of the Manifesto of the New Education Pioneers, shared the belief in the educational and social development subsidized by science (*lato sensu*), as can be read in this excerpt from Manifesto: "[...] the development of the sciences laid the foundation of the doctrines of the new education, adjusting fundamental purpose and will, ideals which she should proceed to the appropriate processes realize them. The extent and wealth that currently reaches everywhere scientific and experimental study of education, freed of empiricism, giving it a character and a spirit clearly scientific and organizing [...]" (MANIFESTO..., 1932, p. 53).

The main function of the center was to research the background Brazilian social structure, both from the point of view more properly anthropological, and from the point of view of our educational reality, of course subsidized by the social sciences and always obeying a principle dear to Anísio: respect specificities of each region of the country. Anísio always defended the idea that the educational reconstruction of the country, much heralded at the time, should be firmly grounded on scientific grounds.

To Anísio, the creation of this body meant the possibility of promoting a series of acts within the research and planning that could constitute itself as benchmarks for educational reform, so that if he had a scientific status, almost a “safe conduct” to conduct their goals and ideals in the fields of intellectual and scientific progress. It was necessary, above all, bring scientific knowledge into the school. In other words, schools should constitute spaces of experimentation and teaching is exactly why Anísio was a great supporter of the school’s educational autonomy. Anísio believed that only through the development of social sciences in the country is that education has become an object of scientific research and this would create the necessary padding to support public policy, educational planning, the important teacher training and any appropriate action and possible that resulted on the improvement of teaching and the reconstruction of the Brazilian educational system (TEIXEIRA, 1999).

However it is important to note that the INEP, since its inception, was ruled an institutional status ambiguous (XAVIER, 1999) law, a body of research. In fact, it was simultaneously executive functions. The same goes for CBPE that despite having been created in order to promote and even developing the proposals of the MEC in relation to educational issues, worked as a INEP within the INEP and, in many instances, acted as an extent of the MEC itself invested with far more power than you would expect of a body and a direction hierarchically subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Culture (MENDONÇA; XAVIER, 2008). The powers of Anísio sometimes were comparable to the Minister himself. This was a prerogative somehow legitimized the conservative political wing has

never failed to perceive and fear. The peculiar position of INEP and Anísio eventually generate a new confrontation with the Catholic Church in the late 1950s, which inevitably contributed to a not too distant future resulted in the loss of his position, status and, once again, its credibility.

One of the main missions of CBPE was to develop programs and create conditions for training and *re-training* of teachers, which Anísio called *training of the scientific spirit of teachers*. This mission was the backbone of the project Anisian, just as it was in the 30s for the pioneering group, translated one of the central topics of the Manifesto (1932) and one of the chapters of the thesis that beautiful Cecilia Meireles had to run for chair of literature at the Normal School Federal District em1929. In this chapter, the formation of the master is addressed by Cecilia generously and lyrical, like all his work:

[...] It seems to me that this educational moment, having solved the problem of defining education needs to give real efficiency, solve the problem of the formation of the master. [...] The master is now the most important factor in the preparation of future society. The teacher appears to us today not with his old appearance transmitter estate knowledge, but as an artist and as a man, creating wide with everything there is too eminent in his intelligence, in his feeling of pure and noble in its activity. A teacher who has tasted the taste of life, intensely, not that there is only within the teaching function: a master to transmit to the disciples did not taste her lips felt, but the desire and moved higher to touch also his mouth this strange drink and tell him the double feeling of eternity and impermanence [...] (MEIRELES, 1929, p. 17-18).

The Regional Centres, through the Division of Teaching Improvement (DAM), was given the task of implementing the “lab schools”³ that would serve as the formal experimentation of new teaching methodologies, testing new programs, curricula and teaching materials, as well to promote training courses for teachers with the main objective to enable them to

³ The initial goal was that each Regional Centre had their experimental school, but only CBPE in Rio de Janeiro and CR Bahia kept such schools.

his work, subsidized by these innovations and at the same time, turns them into multipliers of experiments carried out there (LIMA, 2004).

These schools lab, according Anísio, also constituted a privileged experience for the research developed in CBPE, the “most famous of which was perhaps the Park School of Salvador” (BRANDÃO; MENDONÇA, 1997). Scientists at the Centre could count on the collaboration of teachers to collect data. These, in turn, would become the mainstay of their research. Thus, the knowledge produced within the school could return in the form of improvement and encouragement for teaching practice and, as a corollary, to better use by students.

A vanguard school

In this context was born the School Guatemala, inaugurated in April 1954 by the government of the Federal District. The following year it became the first Central Experimental Primary Education INEP-CBPE. Located in the Plaza President Aguirre Cerda, no. 55, Subdivision of Fatima in central Rio de Janeiro, worked full-time for both the students and for the teachers, who in addition to conducting classes teachers received scholarships from other states, attending refresher courses and evaluation meetings, promoted by the supervisor INEP (BRANDÃO; MENDONÇA, 1997).

In the words of Passos (1996), the school needed professionals endorse their proposal and demonstrated interest in its implementation. A group of teachers accepted this challenge and has deliberately chosen to participate in an innovative and daring: a pedagogical practice-driven research. In this proposal, the role of the teacher was not confined to mere transmitter of knowledge: Much more than that, he was an agent capable of producing knowledge always starting school reality that surrounded him, taking into account the interests of students, thus obtain a level of integration that the learning that is so spontaneous and fun.

The pedagogical proposal stemmed from the assumption that the institution should prepare man for life’s work and social life. Accordingly,

contemplated aspects ranging from the exercise of citizenship through development of the spirit to a life fully democratic, seeking to stimulate practical action that greatly resembled everyday life:

[...] An educational experience is when it follows a transformation of the way to be that the individual is conscious. [...] It is education as a tool for changing the way of being of each, in order to provide an effective action in life situations (PINHEIRO, 1956, p. 32).

Thus, the proposal called for the creation of educational practices more dynamic and greater educational and social value (PINHEIRO, 1956), seeking to overcome the idea of a training fragmented and disconnected from the student's life, which occurred frequently in public schools Brazilian at the time.

Hoping to usher in a new attitude among students, teachers, and especially to encourage research habits in school, we adopted the method of projects as a strategy to reduce passivity in the classroom. This was the main objective. It was believed, therefore, that from this methodology could arouse the total transformation of the person, so how could encourage collaboration and solidarity between groups. For this, it was essential to stimulate the child's desire to learn, just as it was essential to promote *activities that they could accomplish with effort to get the expected success* (PINHEIRO, 1956).

Another successful experience of this institution was the creation and application of the Method of Beehive result of studies of phonics brought from Italy by teachers who matured in that country⁴ (SILVA; PINHEIRO; CARDOSO, 1968). In spite of some criticisms that can be made today on this method, the fact that he was re-signified in school, and adapted to our reality, which is significant, widely known and used in Brazil in the decades of 1960-70, with a literacy rate higher than previously observed, deserves to be considered.

⁴ Although the percentages of those who teach School Guatemala at one year was higher than the state average of Guanabara and Brazil (between 71% and 91%), the new method has come to achieve a 100% score.

For the moment that the country was going through education in the decades of 1950-60, experiments were developed at the School of Guatemala forefront. Do not forget that she wielded dual function: First as an intervention strategy, which from the perspective of Michel de Certeau (1994, p. 46):

It is the calculation of forces which relationship is possible from the moment at which a subject wanting and can be isolated from an 'environment'. It postulates a place can be circumscribed as proper and thus able to serve as a basis for managing its relations with an exterior distinct.

And the second, which is nonetheless due to the first, as formation agent. Many teachers there matured or updated knowledge acquired innovative educational and had the opportunity and infrastructure to test experiences very advanced for the time, resulting from scientific work Technicians INEP/CBPE (LIMA, 2004) and the unshakable will of its director.

Another important result of this experiment was to produce numerous materials to support teachers⁵, such as the Guide to Teaching "Teaching mathematics to Children" Guide Social Studies in the Primary School - 1st to 4th year, tested not only by the School Guatemala but also by other experimental classes in Minas Gerais and Bahia. These and other works were published by INEP/CBPE, part of a collection of books that were of great importance to the national scene in those years.

These books were distributed free to teachers across the country, to take knowledge of scientific production in the field of education, held in the Federal District. Moreover, this appears to have been an efficient way to disseminate new pedagogical ideas and contribute to the renewal of primary education. Possibly there was also the intention to disseminate the experience itself and demonstrate that the school's philosophy anchored in democratic and progressive spirit, added to the project method could obtain excellent results and,

⁵ We opted not to play the numbers and importance of all publications by understanding that goes beyond the limits of this work.

therefore, shown to be capable of being applied in other educational institutions with the same success. It was the perfect marriage between Pragmatism and Development.

However, what draws the most attention in this initiative was the republication of Teaching Guides, which were produced between 1934 and 1935 when Teixeira was Director of Public Instruction of the Federal District. The effect was catastrophic. Anísio was attacked again and again publicly perceived as a threat by conservatives. That his act has generated much controversy because it rekindled old disputes subsequent decades have failed to appease. In the view of Catholics sounded like a continuity strategy in relation to educational policy taken by him during the short period that led the Board and which effectively reproduced the group ideal renovator. It seems that the intention could not be another. Reading the reports, policy documents adopted or to be adopted by INEP/CBPE and especially the correspondence and personal notes⁶ is possible to infer a certain degree of nostalgia in relation to the ideals of the pioneers. Even his relations with former allies, such as Fernando de Azevedo and Lourenço Filho, among others, to some extent remained unchanged. Lourenço Filho was at his side as much as the University of Education in INEP. Fernando de Azevedo directed the Regional Centre of São Paulo⁷, Mario Casassanta alternated the direction of the Regional Center of Minas Gerais with Abgar Renault. These are just a few examples. To Anísio “the memory [of the pioneers] had something to do not only with the past but also to the identity and therefore (indirectly) with own persistence in the future”? (ROSSI, 2010, p. 24). Paolo Rossi himself alerts us to the update made by the memory of the past. The

⁶ Cf. Arquivo Pessoal Anísio Teixeira, Rio de Janeiro, FGV, CPDOC ATc 1954.05.11/2. Also available at: <<http://www.bvanisioteixeira.ufba.br>>. Access on: Sept. 27, 2013.

⁷ The establishment of the Regional Centre of São Paulo was the result of an agreement between the Ministry of Education, through the INEP and Regents of the University of São Paulo.

author (2010, p. 28) says that “memory is that the data fits in conceptual schemes, always reconfigure the past based on the requirements of present”.

Since the creation of the School Guatemala, the goal was to generalize this experience throughout the educational system of the country. Despite the agreement between the MEC and INEP / CBPE have lasted twenty years, and secured in the form of the letter an experimental school by the year 1975, when extinguished in practice after the 1964 coup, the proposal suffered an emptying that finally determined extinction in mid-1968. Anísio again had become *persona non grata* in policy frameworks. The school was, in some ways, the embodiment of Anísio and their ideological convictions and social. Thus, all the work done there was forgotten and was not contemplated by public policies for education, but remained alive and active in who had the opportunity to participate in this unique experience (PASSOS, 1996).

The school still exists in the same place where it always was, but no longer as “showcase” recent “releases” in the field of pedagogical innovation. Today, his physical presence is mixed and confused with many other public institutions throughout the city and country. What survives of the past cannot be sought in its architecture but in its history and in memory of those who had the privilege to participate in this pioneering experiment, saving the past “to serve the present and future” (NORA, 1993, p. 47). Perhaps, if we look in dark basements in dusty bins, we find what we seek resting peacefully. And if we stay quiet, paying close attention to the silence always revealing, maybe we will not hear the many voices who still sing their former glories?

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Received: 07/27/2011

Recebido: 27/07/2011

Approved: 08/08/2011

Aprovado: 08/08/2011